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The University of Southern Mississippi

From Marilyn Monroe to Cindy Crawford: A Historical Analysis of Women's Body  
Image Depicted in Popular Magazines from 1952 to 1995

by

Jayme Nobles

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts  
in the Department of History

May 2014



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## **Abstract**

For this study, the researcher viewed advertisements in popular magazines from 1952 to 1995 that focus on women's body image. The sample consisted of advertisements found in *Life* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines. Instead of observing every issue throughout the forty-three year period, the researcher chose a few issues from each magazine every five years. 180 advertisements were viewed in this study. The researcher observed three different elements found in the advertisements: the product being sold, the appeals of sexuality, if any, in the ads, and the appearance of the advertisements' models. This research attempted to prove that over the course of a forty-three year period, the depictions of women in advertisements found in *Life* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines shifted from curvy women to thin women. Ultimately, this hypothesis was disproved because the women in the magazines were depicted as more athletic than curvy, but the research still remains helpful by providing insights into what could have happened to change the women's depictions from "fit/average" to "lean."

**Key Words:** body image, magazines, *Cosmopolitan*, *Life*, women, history, gender roles, advertisements, media, undergraduate research, thesis

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I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Heather Stur, Ph.D., for believing in me and in my ability to finish this research. I will be forever grateful to have had you as an adviser and without you this research never would have been possible. Dr. Stur, you have been astoundingly patient with me and have done nothing but encourage and guide me through this process. To continue mentoring me even though you were moving to Vietnam for a year was so generous and incredibly kind of you. I am honored to have had you as a mentor.

To my family, thank you so much for always supporting me and reminding me of my goals. You have been like my own personal cheering squad for most of my life and you never give up on me. I am blessed to have you to lift me up when I am down and to believe in me even when I doubt myself. I hope that one day I can give you a tenth of what you have given to me. I love you all very much.

To my friends and sorority sisters, I am sorry that I had to choose schoolwork over you so many times. I am sorry that I sometimes had to barricade myself in my room until I finished my work, but thank you for being there with food and good times when I finally came back out. Thank you for understanding how important this was and encouraging me to see this through to the end. I will never forget the memories that we shared that made USM home.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### The 1950s and 1960s

In order to understand print media's depiction of women in the Fifties and Sixties one must first understand what these eras were like for women. The 1950s bring about a certain stereotypical image of immaculately dressed women, happy families, and classic muscle cars. The post-World War II and Cold War eras were not as picturesque as we imagine. Many women who had served in the labor force during the Second World War returned to their homes. For middle-class women being a housewife had suddenly become not just a woman's duty but a full-time profession. Middle-class suburbia became the image of the American Dream as the number of career opportunities multiplied due to a rise in consumerism.<sup>1</sup> A conservative attitude towards middle-class women became the status quo.

Both the 1950s and 1960s were a time when women's femininity and traditional gender roles were stressed beyond all else. Proper suburban households contained a successful breadwinning husband, an attractive full-time homemaker, and their well-mannered children.<sup>2</sup> By the 1960s, one third of the nation's families lived in suburban homes.<sup>3</sup> Suburbia represented the affluence of the white middle-class family as it was

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<sup>1</sup> Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992) 4.

<sup>2</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Postwar Era* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1988), 21.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Brinkley, *American History: A Survey* (McGraw-Hill, 1991) 5. <http://www.angelfire.com> (accessed December 10, 2013).



not made available to Americans of color even if they could afford it.<sup>4</sup> The years after World War II marked a time where men feared women who had been too successful in providing for themselves and their families in their absence. Men worried that the sense of empowerment women felt might make them too independent and unfeminine. This concern sparked a conservative attitude towards middle-class women, which is a well-known feature of the 1950s. This conservative attitude was meant to keep women out of the workforce. To aid in the containment of women in their homes, returning soldiers were given priority over women in both careers and education. The goal for women in the 1950s was to find enjoyment in fulfilling their maternal duties within the home.<sup>5</sup>

While anxieties concerning the atomic bomb troubled Americans, apprehensions regarding personal issues, mainly sex and gender, also preoccupied the nation. American culture demonized premarital sex and considered marital sex to be the only form of “legitimate” sex. Other forms of sexuality were met with ignorance and were thought of as shameful. The worst crime that a young, white female could commit was “going all the way” or appearing to have.<sup>6</sup> In 1948 and 1953 Alfred Kinsey shocked the entire nation with the findings documented in some of the first sex surveys ever to be completed. His surveys revealed that 50% of the women in his study had experienced premarital sex.<sup>7</sup> Astounded at this information, American society quickly began creating new strategies for sexual containment. Public health professionals, social workers, and

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<sup>4</sup> May, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Breines, 30-33.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>7</sup> May, 115.

writers agreed that early marriage was the most appropriate form of sexual containment for the American libido.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of this obsession with traditional sexual roles, the 1950s experienced a baffling paradox. Women were still entering the work force. A larger number of women were experiencing higher education, and yet this era was both politically and culturally conservative. The 1950s appeared to be a time of opportunity for women, but what may have been the beginning of women's emancipation was masked by harsh and restrictive social norms.<sup>9</sup> The Bureau of Women Workers conducted a survey that revealed that 75% of women workers wished to remain employed after the war ended. As factories and military industries began to shut down, women were laid off and once again returned to their homes.

A decade later, America saw a rise in consumerism and with that came more job opportunities. Businesses sought out single women to hire for secretarial and clerical work.<sup>10</sup> They also looked for educated, middle-class mothers to provide a cheap labor force because of their willingness to accept part-time jobs with low pay and no benefits. Married women made up 52% of the female labor force by 1960.<sup>11</sup> With the number of women continuing to join the labor force increasing, the American public became

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<sup>8</sup> May, 97.

<sup>9</sup> Breines, 1-8, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin, 2000) 12.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

concerned about single women developing “loose” morals and married women leaving their homes and children unattended.<sup>12</sup>

With the fall of Joseph McCarthy in 1954, American citizens settled back once more into the prosperity of the suburban lifestyle. Those who did not want to marry or have children were thought of as deviant.<sup>13</sup> These deviants were accused of being homosexuals or Communists. The emphasis placed on the family unit and women’s domestic work was used as a defense against Communism. It was no longer a duty, but an act of patriotism to raise children and become a full-time homemaker.<sup>14</sup> As a result of Cold War pro-nationalism and pregnancies, being a housewife became a profession. A greater emphasis was placed on being a good mother. Women were encouraged to give their children continuous attention and forego paid work outside the home. After these women spent the day caring for their children and scrubbing the house, they had to be prepared to meet their husbands’ needs at the end of the day. They needed to primp and choose outfits that would make their husbands would find them sexually appealing.<sup>15</sup>

Being a female in the 1950s and 1960s was exhausting and confusing. America’s emphasis on the stereotypical June Cleaver type of housewife was perhaps the most confusing and tiring of all for women. Many women were forced into the role of housewife by the fear of being socially outcast.<sup>16</sup> Although some women did find

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<sup>12</sup> May, 68.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>14</sup> Christina Catalano, “Shaping the American Woman: Feminism and Advertising in the 1950s,” *Constructing the Past* 3, no. 1 (2002): 45, <http://www.digitalcommons.iwu.edu> (accessed December 9, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Rosen, 13-15.

<sup>16</sup> May, 92.

enjoyment working within their homes, many women felt a sense of dissatisfaction and a yearning for a life outside of their children and husbands. These emotions, in turn, created even more feelings of guilt for not being completely satisfied with what they have been taught to want.

## **The 1970s**

The Seventies saw the breakup of the Beatles, the victory of Billie Jean King, and the invention of disco. With their bell bottoms and boogie fever, this time period was one of the “grooviest” in American history. This decade is also remembered as a time of political activism as women, minorities, and homosexuals increasingly sought out legal equality and representation in society. The policy of Affirmative Action was instated. This became a controversial topic as ethnic minorities and women alike demanded their rights to jobs and education. More women became involved in politics and the number of women in state legislatures tripled. The number of women enrolled in college surpassed the enrollment numbers of men in 1979.<sup>17</sup>

In the early 1970s, feminism became a driving force that changed the relationships between men and women. The decade saw a spike in divorce rates as women found it difficult to resume life in their “traditional” gender roles of domesticity. Evidence of the Women’s Movement could be found in all aspects of life from politics to pop culture.<sup>18</sup> The earliest studies of how women were portrayed in media

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<sup>17</sup> Gillis, Charles. "1970-1979." *American Cultural History*. Lone Star College-Kingwood Library. (2010). <http://www.wapps.kc.lonestar.edu/popculture/decade70.html> (January 15, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Public Broadcasting Service. *The 1970s: Battle of the Sexes*. <http://www.pbs.org/makers/movement/1970s/> (accessed January 20, 2014).

advertisements were inspired by the Women's Movement of the early 1970s. "... [T]his research consistently showed that advertisements confined women primarily to traditional mother-, home-, or beauty/sex-oriented roles, which were not representative of women's diverse roles in society."<sup>19</sup> But in 1972 Gloria Steinem launched *Ms. Magazine*. This magazine was created to give women a true voice and an opportunity to express themselves and tell their story on a national level. The circulation of *Ms.* grew rapidly during the 1970s and the magazine did not shy away from the controversial issues such as abortion, women's health, and domestic violence.

The Seventies saw the widespread acceptance of "The Pill" and women were freed from ever-present anxiety of pregnancy. The Women's Movement also fought against states' abortion laws, which ended in the *Roe vs. Wade* decision in 1973, in which the U.S. Supreme Court declared the legalization of abortion, grounding the decision on the right of privacy. The Court stated that the decision to terminate a pregnancy within the first trimester was between the women and her doctor.<sup>20</sup> After the victory of *Roe vs. Wade*, the Women's Movement aimed for a higher goal: the passage of a constitutional amendment recognizing women's equality. Just as victory seemed within reach, a counterattack led by conservative Phyllis Schlafly effectively killed the Equal Rights Amendment.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lindner, Katharina. "Images of Women in General Interest and Fashion Magazine Advertisements from 1955 to 2002." *Sex Roles* 51, no. 7 (October 2004).  
<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023%2FB%3ASERS.0000049230.86869.4d#page-1> (accessed January 20, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Feminist Majority Foundation. *The Feminist Chronicles*.  
<http://www.feminist.org/research/chronicles/fc1991.html> (accessed January 20, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Public Broadcasting Service. *The 1970s: Battle of the Sexes*.  
<http://www.pbs.org/makers/movement/1970s/> (accessed January 20, 2014).

## **The 1980s and 1990s**

By the 1980s, most of the demonstrations and sit-ins found in the 60s and 70s were over, but women were still challenging the ideas of traditional femininity. Women may not have been in the street fighting, but they were still carrying on the legacy of the Women's Movement. Women were becoming university presidents and corporate board members. New opportunities were opening up to women and challenging the old ideas of what women could do with their lives. In 1982 New York City allowed women to become firefighters: a career that was traditionally seen as men's work. Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman to run for vice president on a major party ticket in 1984. The women of America were still making waves and pushing for equality.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1990s more women were elected to higher office and as a result, 1992 was considered the Year of the Woman. By the end of the decade, former First Lady Hillary Clinton was elected to the Senate. This was the first time in history that a First Lady continued to actively participate in politics after the end of her husband's term in office. Under the Clinton administration, Madeline Albright was selected as Secretary of State, Janet Reno served as the United States Attorney General, Sheila Widnall became Secretary of the Air Force, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg served along with Sandra Day O'Connor as the second woman to be on the U.S. Supreme Court. This was a time in history when women were becoming significantly more involved in American politics: a feat that was made possible by the Women's Movement.

The Eighties and Nineties seemed to be an ideal safe haven for young female Americans to come of age in. Legal barriers had been knocked down and more

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<sup>22</sup> *Makers: Women Who Make America*, "Women in the Workplace," 5 min; 41 sec.; from Public Broadcasting Service, MPEG, <http://video.pbs.org/video/2331419282/> (accessed January 15, 2014).

opportunities were available, unlike previous decades. Attitudes towards women seemed to show a greater cultural appreciation for women and their skills and abilities. However, these decades brought on a new set of worries for women. Now more and more women were expected to handle the stress of a career while simultaneously balancing the demands of traditional forms of domesticity such as motherhood and marriage. By the 1980s, 50% of married women worked outside of the home. By 1984 52% of women with children worked outside of the home as compared to the 12% of mothers in the 1950s. By 1994 the U.S. Labor Department Report stated that mothers were entering the workforce sooner, following the birth of their children than in any previous era.<sup>23</sup> Following the trends of the 1960s and 1970s, the 80s saw even more divorces, the rise of the single parent family, and more unmarried couple cohabitating. Having a two-income family was more common than in any previous decades. As college enrollment numbers for females increased, more women earned college and advanced degrees.<sup>24</sup> Women were powerful forces to be reckoned with. They were conquering the workplace, taking on motherhood, and having successful marriages.

The researcher has created a background of what women were like in each decade covered in this study in order to provide the reader with a historical framework. The purpose of this study is to view advertisements found in popular women's magazines (*Life* and *Cosmopolitan*) and to determine if the size of the women in the ads slimmed from 1952 to 1995. The idea behind the research is to understand how women's body image and body ideals have changed from curvaceous women such as Marilyn Monroe to

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<sup>23</sup> Novack

<sup>24</sup> Peggy et al. "1970-1979." *American Cultural History*. Lone Star College-Kingwood Library. (2010) <http://www.wapps.kc.lonestar.edu/popculture/decade90.html>. (accessed January 15, 2014).

more slender women such as supermodel Cindy Crawford. The researcher believes that by observing this change, it will help us to understand the media portrayal of beauty in our own time and how it came to be that way.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

For this thesis, the researcher found only a few books and articles that simply observe how women were portrayed in popular magazines from a historical point of view, which leads her to believe that this research is both needed and important. The researcher found many articles that look at the psychological effects of women's body image presented in print media. Also, there have been many sociological studies conducted about women in advertisements. Thus, the researcher believes her research is unique because it is a historical view versus a sociological or psychological view. Even more research has been conducted to discover how gender roles and stereotypical depictions of women in print media have changed over time than have the body image of the models in the advertisements. This research is important because it will provide historical context that will help to explain why certain images of women have been normalized, why images of beauty have changed over time, and what these images tell us about broader issues of gender and sexuality in the U.S.

### **Body Image**

In the article "The Role of Social Comparison in the Effect of Magazine Advertisements on Women's Mood and Body Dissatisfaction" written by Marika



Tiggemann and Belinda McGill, they found that exposure to images of either body parts or the entire body led to increased negative mood and body dissatisfaction, while the amount of comparison processing was affected by both image type and instructional set.<sup>25</sup> Another article called “Women's Exposure to Thin-and-Beautiful Media Images: Body Image Effects of Media-ideal Internalization and Impact-reduction Interventions” stated that the exposure to thin and beautiful media images adversely influenced the state body image of participants with high internalization levels.<sup>26</sup> Another article titled “Media-portrayed Idealized Images, Body Shame, and Appearance Anxiety” said that media-portrayed idealized images detrimentally affect the body image of young women.<sup>27</sup> Yet even though it has been proven that these images of underweight and thin women are harmful to the body image of women, magazines and other forms of media continue to project these images of thin-ideal women.

In another study titled “Individual Body Satisfaction and Perception: The Effect of the Media's Ideal Body Image on Female College Students” and written by Michelle Leigh Grose, the researcher wanted to determine whether or not a correlation existed between body dissatisfaction and media consumption. Also, the study tried to determine if media consumption motivated consumers to change their bodies. In order to gather information for her research, Grose conducted a survey using college age women as

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<sup>25</sup> Marika Tiggeman and Belinda McGill, “The Role of Social Comparison in the Effect of Magazine Advertisements on Women's Mood and Body Dissatisfaction,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 23, no. 1 (2004): 23-44. <http://guilfordjournals.com/doi/abs/10.1521/jscp.23.1.23.26991> (accessed December 10, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Yuko Yamamiya et al. “Women's Exposure to Thin-and-Beautiful Media Images: Body Image Effects of Media-ideal Internalization and Impact-reduction Interventions.” *Body Image* 2, no. 1 (March 2005): 74-80. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1740144504000737> (accessed January 6, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Fiona Monro and Gail Huon, “Media-portrayed Idealized Images, Body Shame, and Appearance Anxiety,” *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 38, no. 1 (2005): 5-90. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/eat.20153/citedby> (accessed December 9, 2013).

participants. What the study found was that there were “weak to moderate correlations between the media and body satisfaction and the motivation to change one’s body.”<sup>28</sup> The results of this study differ from the results of the studies listed above in which they found that images of women in the media did negatively affect the consumers. The study did find that 84% of the surveyed participants believe the images to be an unrealistic representation of women and 80% believed that media does have the power to influence a person’s body satisfaction.<sup>29</sup> There are many factors that could have led to Grose having different results from other researchers. The researcher read many articles concerning body image and the media for this study and Grose’s article was one of the only articles to present a weak or moderate correlation between media and body dissatisfaction.

The article “Can the Media Affect Us? Social Comparison, Self-discrepancy, and the Thin Ideal” written by Gayle R. Bessenoff focused on exposure to thin-ideal advertisements and whether or not consumption of these types of advertisements increased body dissatisfaction. What was found was that these advertisements not only increased body dissatisfaction, but also amplified feelings of depression and lowered self-esteem.<sup>30</sup> A study was conducted to examine the impact of fashion magazines on women’s body image. Thirty-nine undergraduate women participated in this study. Half were given fashion magazines and the other half were given news magazines to view prior to completing a survey about body image satisfaction. The women who viewed the

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<sup>28</sup> Michelle Leigh Grose, “Individual Body Satisfaction and Perception: The Effect of the Media's Ideal Body Image on Female College Students.” <http://beardocs.baylor.edu/xmlui/handle/2104/5322> (accessed January 6, 2014).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Gayle R. Bessenoff, “Can the Media Affect Us? Social Comparison, Self-discrepancy, and the Thin Ideal,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2006): 239-251. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2006.00292.x/full> (accessed December 10, 2013).

fashion magazines were less satisfied with their bodies and wished they weighed less. They were also more frustrated with their current weight and were preoccupied with the desire to be “skinny.” More of the women who viewed the fashion magazines than the news magazines said that they were afraid of becoming “fat.”<sup>31</sup>

One content analysis viewed for this literature review titled “Media Representations of Female Body Images in Women’s Magazines” written by Karen Brown examined 305 images found in 12 different popular women’s magazines. The researcher found that thin body images were the most common representation of the female form. 99.3% of the 305 images were of models that were considered “thin,” meaning that they were below an average size. Of the 12 magazines that were analyzed, eight magazines (*Allure*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Glamour*, *Health*, *InStyle*, *Shape*, and *Vogue*) showed 100% thin female body images in their advertisements.<sup>32</sup> Another content analysis titled “The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women’s Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image” found that women who viewed thin-idealized magazine advertisements displayed increased levels of self-objectification, weight-related appearance anxiety, negative mood, and body dissatisfaction, which is consistent with what the evidence found in the other research reviewed. For Western women, media images are abundant, and the depiction of the thin-ideal woman within the advertisements is ever-present. Thus, it is not unusual for women to experience higher levels of self-

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<sup>31</sup> S.L. Turner et al., “The Influence of Fashion Magazines on the Body Image Satisfaction of College Women: An Exploratory Analysis,” *Adolescence* 32, no. 127 (1997): 603-614. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9360734> (accessed January 15, 2014).

<sup>32</sup> Karen Ruth Brown, “Media Representations of Female Body Images in Women’s Magazines,” <http://dc.library.okstate.edu/utis/getfile/collection/Dissert/id/73184/filename/73875.pdf> (accessed January 3, 2014).

objectification multiple times a day.<sup>33</sup> This research hopes to explain why advertisements began and continue to perpetuate thin-ideals. Images of Marilyn Monroe compared to images of Cindy Crawford illustrate how drastically the measure of beauty has changed in America over the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century even as the actual size of women continued to increase.

## **Gender Roles**

Nancy A. Walker's book *Shaping Our Mother's World: American Women's Magazines* observed American women's magazines in the 1940s and 1950s in order to view the cultural values that are portrayed in popular American women's magazines during and after World War II. Early in the introduction, Walker states that the point of her study was to prove that gender roles expressed in American women's magazines in the 1940s and 1950s were more complex than they were given credit for in the past. She proves this by examining the past work completed on women's magazines, by observing American women's magazines in many different contexts, by viewing the depictions of the domestic during and after World War II, and by focusing on class and race depictions found within the magazines. Most of the time the messages in the magazines were contradictory and provided the readers with conflicting pictures as well as inconsistent advice even within the same issue of the magazine. She said that most critics do not take this conflict into account in their work. She makes the argument that women's magazine's readers were not solely obedient and docile. Passivity and dependence was not what the

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<sup>33</sup> Brit Harper and Marika Tiggemann, "The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women's Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image," *Sex Roles* 58, no. 1 (2008): 649–657. [http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/813/art%253A10.1007%252Fs11199-007-9379-x.pdf?auth66=1354786229\\_b11ec5bb100f746bb13e31edf19d72e0&ext=.pdf](http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/813/art%253A10.1007%252Fs11199-007-9379-x.pdf?auth66=1354786229_b11ec5bb100f746bb13e31edf19d72e0&ext=.pdf) (accessed January 6, 2014).

women seemed to want to read either. According to Walker, women would write in to these different magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *McCall*, and *Good Housekeeping* complaining about the emphasis the magazines had put on youth and thinness. The first chapter of her book titled “Magazines and Culture in Transition” gives a plethora of examples of complaints written to these women’s magazines in which the women would scold the editors for thinking that they would care for the insipid and shallow articles in the magazines.<sup>34</sup>

The psychological research on women’s body image noted earlier in this paper implies that women would view the advertisements and would try to model themselves after how they were portrayed. That may be the case in self-comparison and body image dissatisfaction, but may not necessarily be the case when dealing with gender roles. Authors such as Joanne Meyerowitz argue that women were not pulled into the feminine mystique.<sup>35</sup> Meyerowitz in her book *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America 1945-1960* argued that women were not as drawn into the submissive housewife role as easily as we are led to believe. Her book is a compilation of 15 essays that range in topic from labor forces to abortion. With these essays, Meyerowitz attempts to overcome the June Cleaver stereotype of this era. Instead, she wants to show the diversity of women’s experiences and that not every woman fits into this stereotype of the perfect wife.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mother’s World: American Women’s Magazines*, (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945- 1960*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

In 1963 Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* began to put into words the repression that she believed millions of women to be feeling. In this book Friedan interviewed 80 women in different stages of life from high school to college to middle age. Women were relieved to learn that other women also felt unhappy within their maternal and martial roles. Friedan calls these feelings "the problem that has no name."<sup>37</sup> For many years, women have suffered in silence, not daring to share their secret dissatisfaction with anyone else. Experts were using books, magazines, and articles to explain to women that they needed to find fulfillment within the home, but millions of women wished to have something better out of life other than waxing the floors and picking up the kids from school.<sup>38</sup>

Friedan explains that journalists, educators, and advertisers created a repressive image for women.<sup>39</sup> Women were rarely shown in advertisements performing important activities outside of the house.<sup>40</sup> This oppressive image added to the containment of women and further secured their bonds to their homes. Mass media and women's magazines fueled the fire for this oppressive women's stereotype. Friedan argued that full-time domestic enslavement stunted women's natural human growth, a growth that most people discover through careers and personal achievement. Because of this stunted growth, women felt unfulfilled and even depressed.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001) 10, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Meyerowitz, 229-232.

<sup>36</sup> Alice Courtney and Sarah Lockeretz, "A Woman's Place: An Analysis of the Roles Portrayed by Women in Magazine Advertisements," *Journal of Marketing Research* 8, no. 1 (1971): 94, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3149733> (accessed December 9, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Meyerowitz, 229-232.

The book became an instant bestseller and is credited with helping to begin the second wave of the feminist movement.<sup>42</sup> Almost every book that has been written on women's lives in the 1950s since its release has cited Friedan, but other authors are not always in agreement concerning Friedan's work. Other historians and sociologists, such as Nancy A. Walker, have debated her work. Walker states in her book that her study does not intend to challenge the work of Friedan, but that *The Feminine Mystique* is a "springboard" for her discussion. She attests that it depended on the woman reading the magazine as to how repressive the material appeared to be and that the magazines in the 1950s do not always represent the same unified domestic image of women. Walker also states that a woman could have read two different magazines and found contradictory messages about how to act and behave. Walker does agree that the mid-century was a time when homemaking was no longer considered a chore, but as a part of a woman's personality.<sup>43</sup> Joanne Meyerowitz found that the mass culture was "neither wholly monolithic nor unrelentingly repressive." Meyerowitz believes that the media was compiled of contradictions sometimes within the same sentence. She found that even when women were presented as publicly successful that the conservative reminders of traditional gender roles followed closely behind, but she believes Friedan's work to be exaggerated.<sup>44</sup>

The term feminine mystique, used above and coined by Betty Friedan, first

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<sup>42</sup> Linda J. Busby and Greg Leichty, "Feminism and Advertising in Traditional and Nontraditional Women's Magazines, 1950s-1980s," *Journalism Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (1993): 247, <http://www.jmq.sagepub.com> (accessed January 3, 2014).

<sup>43</sup> Walker, 15-16.

<sup>44</sup> Meyerowitz, 234-235.

appeared in her book titled *The Feminine Mystique*. The feminine mystique was the term Friedan used to explain the image that was expected of a housewife. The phrase expresses the idea that women naturally want to perform the role of housewife and mother. Not all women bought into the feminine mystique, and thus felt guilty for wanting more out of life than her children, husband, and home.<sup>45</sup> Meyerowitz and Walker both used the term feminine mystique in their research. Many authors frequently cite Friedan's work when conducting studies or writing books about women as she was one of the first female authors to speak out against stereotypical female gender roles. Friedan's book describes the widespread unhappiness of women in the 1950s and early 1960s. She intended to write only an article on the topic, but no magazine that she approached would publish the article, as most of the editors of women's magazines were men. It went against what the magazines were telling their female readers.<sup>46</sup>

As stated earlier, some women openly rejected the importance that magazines were putting on youth and thin ideals. The book *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* by Wini Breines also expressed an unhappiness women felt within their predetermined gender roles. Breines explored the white middle class of America in the 1950s and argues that mixed messages sent to women during this era were the spark that led to what later became known as feminism. While Breines' book is mostly about the lives of other women, it is, in part, a memoir about her own experiences growing up female in such a confusing time. These girls grow up in a society that seemed to offer more opportunities to women, but also had strict gender roles. The

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<sup>45</sup> Friedan, 10, 15.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



mixed messages received from the media and from their own parents caused these women to start to question their own gender roles.<sup>47</sup>

To tie the psychological and historical research together, the researcher believes that as an emphasis was placed on the thin ideal women and the size of the average women increased, women might have looked at the models in the advertisements and felt appearance anxiety because what the advertisements were portraying was not what they wanted for their selves and the standards in the magazine were impossible to attain or perhaps the idea of the stereotypical housewife was not what they wanted for themselves, which in turn created anxiety. This research is important because it can help to show why and what factors led to this growing epidemic of body dissatisfaction.

### **Body Mass Index**

The body mass index of American citizens has increased dramatically over time. Men and women are more likely to be overweight or obese today than in any other time in the nation's history. According to authors Thomas P. LaFontaine, Ph.D. and Jeffrey L. Roitman, Ed.D., "...overweight and obesity rates have continued to increase during this expansion of health-related industries."<sup>48</sup> Daily caloric expenditure has declined since the 1950s and 1960s with the introduction of passive entertainment into Americans' everyday lives, such video games, computing, and watching television. Food is also more readily available than it used to be. Food availability has increased almost 15% since the

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<sup>47</sup> Breines, 114.

<sup>48</sup> LaFontaine, Thomas P. and Jeffrey L. Roitman. "Lifestyle Management of Adult Obesity: Etiology of Obesity" <http://shp.missouri.edu/vhct/case2500/etiology.htm> (accessed January 6, 2014).

mid-1970s. With more food available and exercise removed from our leisure activities, Americans are gaining more weight and taking longer to burn it off.<sup>49</sup>

In “Gender Differences in Population Versus Media Body Sizes: A Comparison over Four Decades,” a study conducted by Brenda L. Spitzer, Katherine A. Henderson, and Marilyn T. Zivian, the researchers tried to determine the differences between the size of the population for both males and females as compared to the size of bodies represented in the media. What this study found was the sizes of Miss America Pageant winners and the body sizes of Playboy centerfold models from the 1950s to the present remained below the average body weight for women. A fact that was true for every decade for which they gathered research. They found that the average body size and shape in young adults compared to the body size and shape promoted by the media were increasingly different by the 1990s. As the average body mass index increased over time, models continued to stay underweight.<sup>50</sup>

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This study will seek to answer a number of questions about depictions of women’s body image in American advertisements throughout the second half of the 20th century. How were women depicted in advertisements? How did these depictions of women change over time? Did the women’s movement affect women’s opinions about advertisements’ emphasis on youth and beauty? What were the advertisements trying to

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Brenda L. Spitzer et al., “Gender Differences in Population Versus Media Body Sizes: A Comparison Over Four Decades,” *Sex Roles* 40, no. 7-8. (1999): 545-565.  
<http://www.springerlink.com/content/w126r0485527507m/> (accessed December 9, 2013).

sell? What is happening during this time period the change the way that women are depicted in advertisements? In this study the following hypothesis will be proved or disproved according to the evidence found in the research and will explain why the depiction of women in magazines shifted from curvy, full figured women such as Marilyn Monroe in the 1950s to thinner models such as Cindy Crawford in the 1990s. As the size of the average woman began to increase over the course of the 20th century, the thin-ideal was created; this led to the magazine advertisements depicting thinner models.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

This chapter provides a detailed account of how the research was conducted. It describes how the magazines were chosen and which advertisements were selected and why. Based on the literature review and previous researchers' observations, the researcher has developed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Over the course of a forty-three year period, the depictions of women in advertisements found in *Life* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines will shift from curvy women to thin women.

The following methods and research design were used in order to complete this study and to determine the validity of the researcher's hypothesis.

#### **Research Design and Method**

In this study, the researcher analyzed advertisements from two popular magazines. The magazines from which the samples were chosen are *Life Magazine* and *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. This study was conducted using the historical research method in order to view the change in body image and the depiction of women in popular magazines from 1952 to 1995. *Life* and *Cosmopolitan* were chosen in order to conduct this research because both publications were in circulation for the time period being studied and both are/were considered to be popular magazines.

The sample for this study was taken from three issues of each magazine every five years. For example, three issues of *Life Magazine* and *Cosmopolitan Magazine* were chosen from 1952, and then another three issues of each magazine will be chosen from

1957. The issues that were selected at random or if issues from that particular year were difficult to find, the researcher chose the three that were made available for viewing. Three advertisements from each issue were observed; thus, eighteen advertisements were observed for every five year period. The sample of advertisements consisted of medium, large or full-page ads that pictured women as both live models and illustrations. If more than three images were available for observation in a magazine, the three images that allowed the viewer to see the most of the model/illustrations body, particularly the waistline, shoulders, and hips, were selected for this thesis. Every issue of each magazine for all forty-three years was not chosen to make up the sample for this research because it would have taken years to shift through all of the primary resources. Also, there would not have been a significant change in body image depictions from one year to the next. Viewing advertisements from every five years provided enough time to see a change in body image and a change in fashion, but not too often that the changes in body image were too subtle to notice.

The research for this study was qualitative in nature, which means that no statistics are included as part of the results of this study. This is a historical analysis and not a content analysis and so code sheets were not used. When observing the images three different elements were analyzed: what product the advertisements were selling, were the women “full-figured”, “lean”, or “fit/average”, and were there any sexual appeals in the advertisement. These elements allowed the researcher to detect patterns, themes, and/or relationships in the collected data. For the purposes of this study, the illustrations of women in the ads will be referred to as “full-figured,” “lean,” or “fit/average.” “Full-figured” will be used for women who accentuate a curvier body. The term “lean” will be

used to describe a woman who appears to be thinner than average. Lastly, the term “fit/average” will be used to describe women with an athletic or average body type. The researcher observed the width waistline of the model in comparison to the width of her shoulders and hips to decide how to categorize each advertisement. Once all of the samples were collected, they were compared to one another to determine the shift in women’s body image over the forty-three year time period.

The primary sources used in this research are samples of advertisements taken from the magazines. In order to determine what was happening historically during this time period, scholarly monographs and Internet research were used. The secondary sources are books such as *Shaping Our Mother’s World: American Women’s Magazines* by Nancy A Walker, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing up Female in the 1950s* by Wini Breines, *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan, and *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* by Joanne Meyerowitz to name a few. These books are, for the most part, written by women who grow up during the 1950s and 1960s. For example, Nancy A. Walker’s book *Shaping Our Mother’s World* is written about the world of women’s magazines and the transition of culture and women’s magazines, but Walker has also thrown her own experience in her book and talks about her family and childhood and what it was like to grow up in the 1950s. In fact the book opens with a picture of Walker, her mother, and her doll all dressed in stereotypical 50s dresses. These authors have their own life experience with what it was like to be female during this period, and also, they have researched this period, which makes their monographs the best option for a secondary source base.

In order to acquire all of the materials needed to find the sample data, the researcher purchased all of the copies of *Cosmopolitan Magazine* that were used in this study from 1952 to 1995. The researcher also purchased the copies of *Life Magazine* used from 1977 to 1995. The magazines were purchased from multiple vendors on both [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Fortunately, *Life Magazine* and Google have partnered to put all of the copies of the magazine from 1936 to 1972 on Google Books, and thus, the copies of *Life* from 1952 to 1972 were found were gathered from the Life Magazine Digital Archive hosted by Google Search Engine.

## Chapter IV: Discussion of Research Findings

### Results

Once all of the advertisements were looked over, the researcher found that the hypothesis was only partially correct. The hypothesis stated that the depictions of women would shift from curvy to thin women, but most of the magazine advertisements depicted women as “fit/average” in the 1950s and the ads moved on to “lean” models as the years progressed. Although actresses like Marilyn Monroe were curvier and were thought to be sex symbols, the models in the magazines did not reflect her type of voluptuousness. There were fewer depictions of “full-figured” women in the magazines than any other category. Most of the models were “fit/average” until the 1970s and then the number of “lean” models spiked. Of the 180 images viewed, “lean” was the most found model size with 90 of the 180 models perceived as “lean.” “Fit/average” had the second highest numbers with 66 of the advertisements seen as a healthy, athletic build. The category “full-figured” had the fewest numbers only accounting for 24 of the 180 advertisements viewed.

The advertisements found in *Life Magazine*, more often than not, showed women in a stereotypical homemaker/housewife role even in the late eighties and early nineties. The advertisements in this particular magazine very rarely showed any signs of sexual appeals in the first two decades observed in this study. There was a gradual increase in the number of ads that had sexual appeals throughout the decade. For example, sexual imagery was found more frequently in the late 1980s and early 1990s than in the 1950s or 1960s. *Life Magazine* mostly ran ads depicting women as mothers or domestic goddesses



until then. The products most often sold by female advertisement models in the Fifties, Sixties, and Seventies were appliances such as stoves, ovens, ironing boards, and beauty products such as perfume, hair dye, and deodorant. In the 1980s and 1990s more advertisements showed women in career roles and fewer women in family settings, but still a number of ads depicted women as homemakers, mothers, and other stereotypical female gender roles. Models in the 1970s -1990s were more likely to be shown exercising than in the two previous decades. Very few advertisements in this particular magazine picture just women. Most of the ads featuring women also included men and/or children. Also, few advertisements showed women's entire body. Most of the ads showed only the head of women or specific body parts such as hands, legs, or arms.

*Cosmopolitan Magazine* advertisements also featured women in a home setting selling cleaning products, foods, and home appliances with frequency in the 1950s. By the late 1960s and 1970s the number of ads with stereotypical gender roles decreased and a number of women in the work place and in careers could be seen in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Beauty products will always be a prevalent mark of both general interest and women's magazines and *Cosmopolitan* had plenty. Before the early 1960s there was not many advertisements with sexual appeals, but in 1965 *Cosmopolitan Magazine* was revamped from a general interest magazine into a women's magazine by new editor Helen Gurley Brown. The magazine became the single woman's bible as Gurley Brown wrote straightforward articles about single women, sex, and women in the workforce.<sup>51</sup> This magazine, particularly in the Eighties and Nineties had far more sexual appeals in its advertisements. Since its rebirth as a women's magazine,

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<sup>51</sup> Craig Wilson, "Helen Gurley Brown Made Cosmopolitan more than a Magazine," USA Today, August 13, 2012, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/people/obit/story/2011-08-02/helen-gurley-brown-cosmopolitan-dies-at-90/57039456/1> (accessed January 25, 2014).

Cosmopolitan has been known for its daring cover models with come hither looks and the advertisements inside reflected that boldness. The ads also featured more models that were mostly decorative rather than involved in the setting in which the advertisements placed them in.

## **Discussion**

To restate, the purpose of this research was to view the advertisements in both *Life* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines from 1952 to 1995 and to observe the body image of the women depicted in these magazines. The research method and design were created to test the hypothesis that the women in the advertisements would shift from depictions of “full-figured” women to “lean” women. Again, the researcher has concluded that although women did not shift from “full-figured” to “lean” the women did shift from “fit/average” to “lean.”

Research on this particular topic seems to be a bit thin and so the hypothesis was created with the two biggest “sex objects” of the time in mind: Marilyn Monroe in 1952 and Cindy Crawford in 1995. With Marilyn Monroe being so incredibly popular in her time, the researcher assumed that the models of popular magazines would take after her curvy looks and thus, the models would have been considered “full-figured” by the researcher’s standards, but that was not the case. Although the hypothesis of this paper was disproved, the researcher still believes that the research conducted was important and informative.

So why did women’s body depictions shift from “fit/average” to “lean?” The researcher believes that the key to that is the fitness/exercise boom of the 1970s. By the

Seventies, Americans' awareness of fitness grew and with that the role of exercise in American lives expanded and exercise become part of recreational pastimes. Jogging was one of the most popular forms of fitness. For example, the New York Marathon, which had previously only had approximately 300 participants in 1972 expanded to include more than eleven thousand competitors in 1979. With the influence of the women's movement and Title IX, an act that imposed gender equality in sports opportunities in educational organizations, a large number of women took up sports for the first time in the 1970s.<sup>52</sup>

The average size of men and women continued to rise during this time and obesity numbers exploded in the 1980s as food is made more readily available and fewer people cook at home, turning America into a fast food nation. Because of the fitness boom and the increasing waist band of Americans, the diet industry takes off, and by the 1980s is a multi-billion dollar a year industry. "Within the structure of that industry there is a great deal at stake to keep women hooked into the obsession about their beauty, their weight and their dieting practices."<sup>53</sup> Advertisements that show women who are impossibly thin and beautiful despite the rising obesity rates are showing women what they should aspire to become. Women try to achieve the impossible, and so they buy the diet products that only guarantee a temporary solution to their weight problems. When the diet is over, the women will mostly likely gain the weight they lost plus some. The women then see the perfect women in the magazine ads and experience body dissatisfaction and decide to

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<sup>52</sup> John C. Super, ed., *The Seventies in America*, Salem Press, 2005. [http://salempress.com/store/samples/seventies\\_in\\_america/seventies\\_in\\_america\\_fitness\\_movement.htm](http://salempress.com/store/samples/seventies_in_america/seventies_in_america_fitness_movement.htm) (accessed January 25, 2014).

<sup>53</sup> Barbara A. Cohen, "The Psychology of Ideal Body Image as an Oppressive Force in the Lives of Women," 1984. [http://www.healingthehumanspirit.com/pages/body\\_img3.htm](http://www.healingthehumanspirit.com/pages/body_img3.htm) (accessed January 25, 2014).

purchase more diet products; thus an endless circle is created. The fact that diets do not work is the best kept secret in the diet industry. Only long-term lifestyle changes will help women to lose weight and stay healthy.<sup>54</sup> “By presenting an ideal difficult to achieve and maintain, the cosmetic and diet product industries are assured of growth and profits.”<sup>55</sup> The shift the researcher saw from “fit/average” women to “lean” women could be rooted in an economic ploy to keep women reaching for the unattainable.

### **Limitations**

One of the many limitations of this study was the difficulty in acquiring both *Life Magazine* and *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. The researcher had to resort to buying multiple issues of the magazines from vendors on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) which was both time consuming and expensive. Also, perspective could be seen as a limitation to this study. What is “lean” today is not a true reflection of what was “lean” in the 1950s. In today’s time Cindy Crawford would be a plus size model, but in the 1990s, she was considered to be thin. Another limitation to this thesis is that it can only speak to the white women’s experience and so it only targets a small percentage of the population.

### **Directions for Future Research**

In terms of future research, it would be interesting to have a more ethnically diverse study as this study focused mainly on white women as that is what most ads featured. Adding a racially diverse magazine like *Ebony* or *Essence* would be interesting;

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Angela Marie MacDougall, “Beauty and Body Image in the Media,” Battered Women’s Support Services, 2011. <http://www.bwss.org/beauty-and-body-image-in-the-media/> (accessed January 25, 2014).

although the timeframe would possibly need to be changed slightly. Viewing more magazines or perhaps traditional women's magazines like *Ladies' Home Journal* versus nontraditional women's magazines like *Ms. Magazine* and comparing the advertisements found between the two would be fascinating.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, the researcher's hypothesis was ultimately disproved by the results of this study, but the research conducted still helps to explain the shift in women's body depictions just not in the way that the researcher originally intended. This study has the potential to help others with their research in women's body image and depictions of women in popular magazines by showing that the creation of the thin ideal was not developed overnight, but instead has been slowly integrated into our everyday life through magazine ads, movies, billboards, etc. with the models becoming thinner throughout the years. Knowing the history of how women's body image changed over the course of 43 years will give us a better understanding of body image in the present and will help us to see that how the media portrays women as sexually attractive is constantly changing, and not always for the better. Tracking this change can help researchers to deduce what has happened to create such negative and sometimes harmful feelings women hold towards their appearance. This thesis helps to shape the historical landscape of white women in advertisement and shows that the creation of the thin-ideal has been around for longer than society thinks.

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**Appendix 1:**  
**Sample Images from Cosmopolitan Magazine**



Figure 1: This is an advertisement for New Mum cream deodorant. This woman is in the “full-figured” category as she has a small waist, but a large bust and hips. (Cosmopolitan, July 1952)



Figure 2: This “full-figured” woman is enjoying a drink at what looks to be a party in this Coca-Cola advertisement. (Cosmopolitan, July 1952)



Figure 3: This is an advertisement for Lilli Ann clothing, shoes, accessories. The woman has been categorized as “fit/average.” (Cosmopolitan, September 1957)



Figure 4: This couple shows off their American Tourister luggage. This woman is “fit/average.” (Cosmopolitan, May 1962)



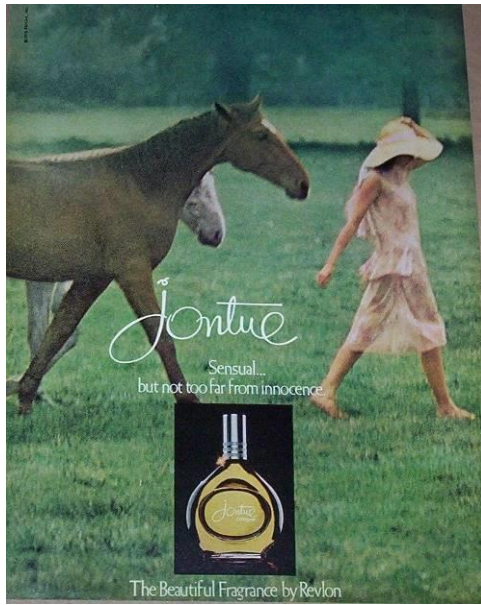


Figure 7: This woman goes for a stroll with her horses in this Jontue perfume ad by Revlon. She has been categorized as “lean.” (Cosmopolitan, July 1977)



Figure 8: This is a bikini ad from Body by Roxanne. The model in the photograph is considered to be “fit/average.” (Cosmopolitan, January 1982)





Figure 9: This “lean” woman is posing seductively in this Ce Soir intimate apparel advertisement. (Cosmopolitan, May 1982)



Figure 10: This Virginia Slim cigarette advertisement shows how far women have come by showing a historical photograph of women in comparison to the model and the slogan “You’ve come a long way, baby.” The woman in the photograph is considered “fit/average.” (Cosmopolitan, August 1987)

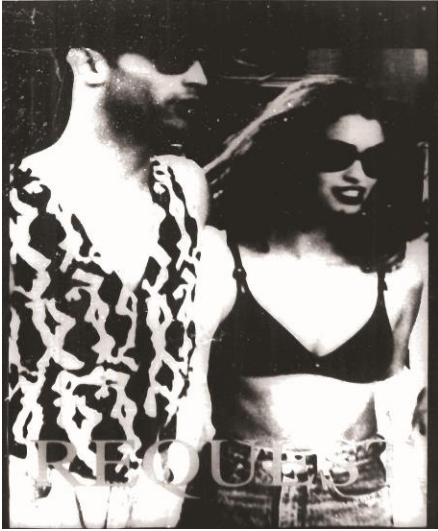


Figure 11: This is a Request Jeans advertisement. This image is in the “lean” category as you can see the model’s ribs even in a microfiche photo. (Cosmopolitan, July 1987)

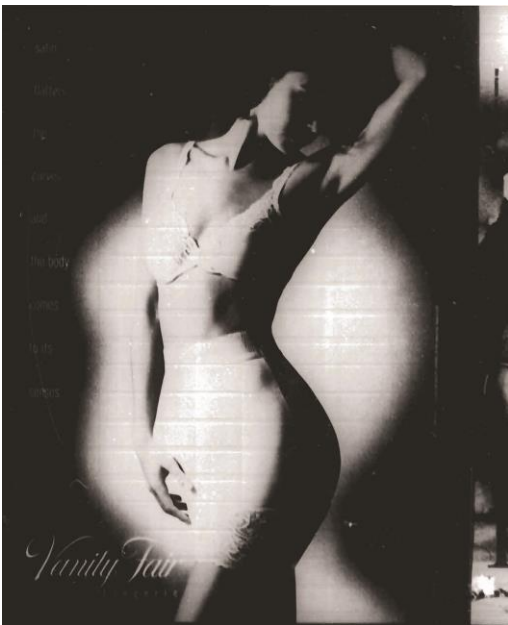


Figure 12: In this Vanity Fair lingerie advertisement, this model is considered “fit/average.” (Cosmopolitan, October 1992)





Figure 13: This woman in this Christmas clothing advertisement is categorized as “lean.” (Cosmopolitan, November 1992)

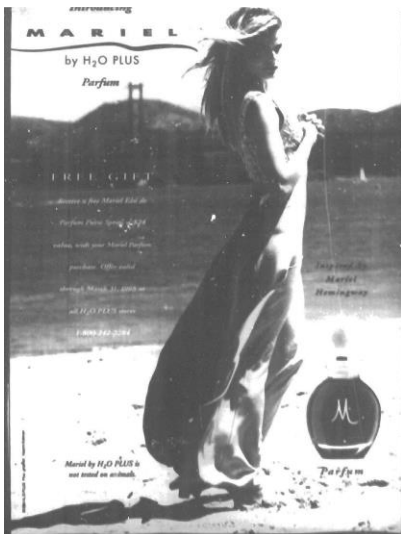


Figure 14: In this Mariel perfume advertisement by H2O Plus, this model poses seductively by a body of water. This woman has been categorized as “lean.” (Cosmopolitan, February 1995)



Figure 15: In this Navy perfume by Cover Girl advertisement, this woman is categorized as “lean.” (Cosmopolitan, March 1995)

## Sample Images from Life Magazine

# \$25 Buys Your New Easter Suit

**SACONY SUITS OF PALM BEACH-CLOTH  
STRIP LAGGING, RETAIL, SALES**

There is no better time for women who have been waiting helplessly while the prices of clothing soar than the fact that women the nation now have a chance to buy a new suit for only \$25. And, what have had little hope (yet) of being able to afford a new suit, have can be even more wonderfully and suitably better months ago. The credit for this favorable situation goes to a company called Sacony (pronounced with Malacca) who have endeavored again in the women's industry in Palm Beach, Fla. This is an all-around kind of wool and rayon that nature has provided, lends to give her intelligent women who, wanting to wear it in dry climate. Sacony's Palm Beach cloth, comes in two colors (white, light blue) and dark (dark blue, dark navy) and is so regular that they are worn satisfactorily by women in all climate conditions.

Inventory for women to suit (Grillage Point, Long Island, N.Y.) for a free look of fashion, for \$25.00. Number for women who wish to see the fabric.



**SACONY DRESSMAKER STYLE has new women's wearing fabric, these women for perfect fit. Sacony is regular on price (one to 20) half size, \$45 to \$45.95.**



**TWO-PIECE SUIT, Islander House, classic, has two-piece women's pattern. Sacony is regular on price (one to 20) half size, \$45 to \$45.95.**



**WELL-WEIGHED JACKET and skirt suit like this in size to wear, one to wear on one. Sacony can be in regular sizes, one to 20, half size to two pieces, \$45.**



**SHORT-SLEEVED SUIT has cardigan-style jacket, two-colored silk. Sacony can be in regular sizes, one to 20, half size to two pieces, \$45.**

**Single Buttoned Model, illustrating Sacony fabric, has single model from the Sacony fabric, one to 20, half size, \$45 to \$45.95.**

*Advertisement copyrighted by Sacony*

When Used Without Payment of Special Request, No

Copyrighted by

Figure 1: This advertisement is for Sacony Suits of Palm Beach and is advertising Easter dresses. The women in the ad are categorized as “lean.” (Life, April 7, 1952)

Not a shadow  
of a doubt  
- with Kotex

*Not a shadow* of a revealing outline because only Kotex of all leading napkins gives you tails that are flat and covered.

*Not a doubt* - for confidence and peace-of-mind go hand in hand with the extra absorbency and safety of Kotex's patented napkins for actual use!

Best of all, this gift is made in easy-to-read writing... so it catches the eye and resonates far from and home. The visible Kotex is America's first choice in napkins... always, very generously yours.

More women choose Kotex's than all other sanitary napkins



© 1984, WELLS & WELLS, INC.

Figure 2: In this Kotex sanitary napkins advertisement, this women is categorized as “lean.” (Life, May 5, 1952)



Figure 3: This ad shows a “fit/average” woman getting ready to get out and wearing her Sta-flat by Warner’s. (Life, February 11, 1957)



Figure 4: This is a Pepsi advertisement that shows two “lean” women. (Life, June 24, 1957)

## How sugar helps weight-watchers stay inside their belts

The thing that most often makes a belt too small is an appetite that's too big.

How can you eat less food without being hungry all the time?

Sugar is a natural satiator. It turns off your appetite faster than most foods—with less calories.

That's why you'll find sugar and the good foods that contain it in most modern diets.



**Why headaches are sugar between halves.** Sugar helps furnish energy almost the instant it's given. The body's cells and activities need to function strong. Even if you're just a lullaby, moving sugar back, you have quick energy. See. Sugar is one of Nature's best sources.



**Sugar as a "satisfier" for sleep.** Right from the start of feeding to feeding, sometimes when the sugar goes into the body, it's almost as if it's a little bit of sleep. If there's some more and they're perfect, the body will sugar itself. But the important, but the sugar is the food itself. Try adding a little sugar to your table sugar. You'll find that it brings out a lot of flavor.



**18 CALORIES!** The average sugar packet contains 18 calories. In a packet of sugar, there are 18 calories. (See figure on right of this ad.)

**Sugar satisfies your appetite faster and with less calories than most other foods.**

**18 calories in the sugar.** 18 calories in the sugar. 18 calories in the sugar. 18 calories in the sugar.

Published in the interest of better nutrition by

**SUGAR INFORMATION, INC.** a non-profit organization  
NEW YORK & NEW YORK



Figure 5: This sugar advertisement shows Life's readers how sugar can help them stay thin. The woman in the ads is categorized as "fit/average." (Life, January 5, 1962)



Figure 6: This vintage Kodak advertisement shows two "lean" women having a great day at the beach. (Life, July 27, 1962)



Figure 7: This Nice'n Easy by Clairol hair color advertisement depicts a “fit/average” woman running towards a man who is not pictured. (Life, March 10, 1967)



Figure 8: This ad is for KOOL cigarettes and pictures a “fit/average” woman and a man relaxing by a tropical stream. (Life, May 5, 1967)



The gas grill that cooks your whole meal outdoors!

Now you can  
cook out,  
roast out,  
smoke out,  
broil out,  
bake out, and  
chocolate cake out.



You can cook whole meals outdoors with Laker's Warm Morning Broilmaster. It's a gas grill with an oven. With two separate burners, you control the heat. Even as you're away, a timer for up to 100 minutes lets you know when it's time to cook out. It's so easy. No longer, broil, no more. Warming, delicious temperatures fast to suit the needs of your outdoor cooking. See your Warm Morning dealer.

And here's our unique Broilmaster. It's not just a grill. It's a kitchen. With a built-in oven, a side burner, and a warming rack, it's the perfect outdoor cooking center. The Broilmaster oven, also available with a timer, is a real outdoor kitchen.

**Warm Morning  
broilmaster**

Figure 9: This is an ad for Broilmaster, a grill that can cook any type of food outdoors. The woman in this ad is considered to be “lean.” (Life, April 21, 1972)

**Don't wake up on the wrong side of an ordinary firm mattress. Wake up feeling good on a Sealy Posturepedic.**

You can't compare the world with a morning backache. That's why Sealy Posturepedic® doesn't make an ordinary firm mattress. We created something entirely different—the unique back support system. Here's how we made it different. First, we put in more coils. And positioned them for more support. Then we lined up the coils, where everyone complains their back is sagging. And we replaced the old-fashioned box springs with a tension bar foundation. To work together with the mattress, for more give and take. For better all-around support. For health, we didn't do all this by accident. Sealy Posturepedic is designed in cooperation with leading orthopedic surgeons for firm comfort.

The truth is a bed that comes with a promise of no morning backache from sleeping on a firm mattress. With features so unique we've had them patented. What's more, you can get all this Posturepedic comfort and support in big modern sizes. The beds that don't end before you do.

As well as bed on a Sealy Posturepedic. Your back will tell you the difference all night. And all day.

**SEALY POSTUREPEDIC**  
The unique back support system.

Figure 10: This is a mattress ad by Sealy that features a “lean” model. (Life, October 20, 1972)



Figure 11: This World Book encyclopedia advertisement features a “fit/average” woman in conversation with a scholarly looking man. (Life, Winter 1977)



Figure 12: This Bell South ad features a proud, “fit/average” mother and father and their daughter the tennis player. (Life, March 1982)



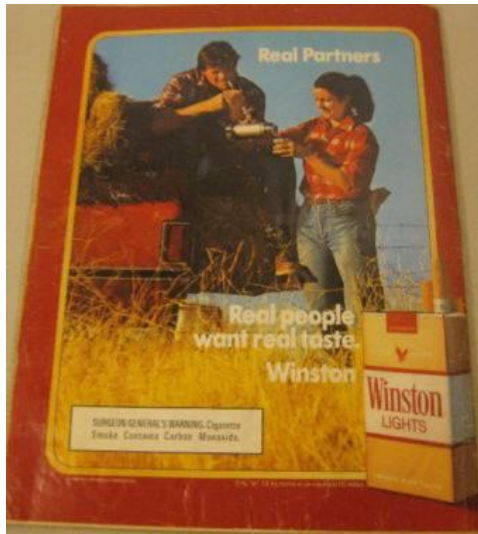


Figure 13: This Winston Lights cigarette advertisement shows a couple in a pickup truck out in the field sharing a smoke break. The woman in this ad is “full-figured.” (Life, September 1987)



Figure 14: In this Belair cigarette ad, a couple sit on a log along a trail overlooking the ocean. The woman in this ad is considered to be “fit/average.” (Life, December 1992)



Figure 15: This Virginia Slims cigarette advertisement shows a “lean” business woman making a phone call during her smoke break. (Life, October 1995)